

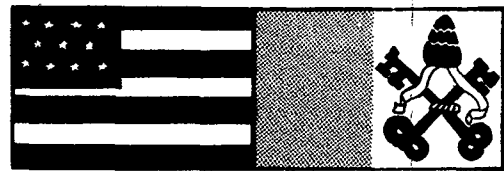
Fifty-year-old comments shed light on church today

By Father Paul J. Cuddy
Courier Columnist

Recently, someone sent me a clipping from the Auburn daily paper, *The Citizen*. Dated 1926, it was an address given by the Reverend Ralph Walker to a great assemblage at the Central Church of Christ, Disciples. The report reads that after all available seating and standing room had been occupied by attendants from all parts of Cayuga County, upwards of 100 persons were turned away. I suspect that the audience was astonished in those days, a time of denominational strife long before ecumenism. Here are excerpts from the address entitled "The Meaning of the Roman Catholic Mass."

"I did not see so many Protestants on the streets at 7:30 last Sunday morning, but I did see hundreds of Catholics going, as I was going to 8 a.m. Mass."

Comment: Sixty years ago the percentage of American Catholics faithful to Sunday Mass was probably 75 percent, and



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

much higher in Catholic ethnic enclaves, of which Auburn had several. Statistics today indicate 50 percent or less.

"I did not get into the Church without a welcome. It was not an elder or a deacon but the priest himself who stood in the doorway, and greeted me so kindly."

Comment: I wonder who the priest was. Sixty years ago priests were quite aloof and awesome, which is a pity. Probably Father Payne of St. Mary's, who shocked the city of Auburn, long before ecumenism, by aligning himself with the ministers of the city to promote prohibi-

tion. He was a very progressive cleric.

"I saw it was a Church of Christ, for nearly every picture, image and representation told the story of Jesus."

Comment: As pictures and statues of Christ, His Mother and the saints are a scandal to certain delicate religious and their satellites, they were a source of edification to Rev. Walker. They are a source of edification to most practicing Catholics and even to those who are not. It is a horror that so many places have tossed out these aids to piety and beauty and instruction. The people are not consulted about this rejection of these things which generations have prized. Arbitrary power can do terrible things. History records these Reformers in England smashing stained glass windows, holy altars, beautiful statues in their hatred of these sacramentals.

"The church was filled before the service began. People knelt, their faces steadfastly directed toward the altar, a solemn

hush upon us all. There was absolute silence. No whispering — excepting whispered prayers. The children were as reverent as the rest."

Comment: Sixty years ago Catholics considered the church as the House of God, since the Blessed Sacrament was housed on the altar. Our progressivists now have our Lord in a wall, or on a side shrine, or in an out-of-the-way chapel to make the Church building a hall where ecclesiastical events, mostly the Eucharist, take place. The emphasis is on community. So "Credo," which means "I believe," changes to "We believe," and the feminists have hornswaggled pliable priests to twist "Patrem omnipotentem" which is clearly "Father almighty" into a weird "Father — Mother almighty." Since the Church is now more of a community center, reverence is de-emphasized and chumminess the "in" thing. Vatican II correctly stressed community and concern for one another and neighborliness. However pre-Vatican II was doing it right along, but not in the House of God.

"In Christendom today, Catholicism is the great outstanding conservative tendency. It reveres the past, clings unalterably to its traditions, and is immovably steadfast in its authority in matters of faith and morals."

Comment: As I remember Auburn from my childhood, I wonder what the reaction to this strange talk was. Strange and good things are happening. A group of concerned citizens in Auburn, with many of the leaders strong Catholics, worked hard and successfully to preserve the beautiful chapel that is the only remaining building of the Auburn Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and the only Tiffany chapel in the world. The Rev. Ralph Walker is to be praised for his appreciation of the Mass and our traditions, and his anticipation of the ecumenism of Vatican II.

God sometimes comes in 'tiny whispering sound'

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

It is interesting that after Elijah's great miracle of bringing fire down from heaven and Jesus' feeding of 5,000 men with five loaves, storms follow. A storm on Mt. Horeb "rending the mountains and crushing the rocks" (R1); a storm at sea, "the boat ... being tossed about in waves raised by strong head winds" (R3).

Elijah made the mistake of supposing that fire from heaven was the only symbol by which God could make Himself known; that hurricanes, earthquakes, forked lightnings were the expressions of the essential nature of God. On Mt. Horeb he learned that God was not in the wind, the earthquake, the fire, but in "a tiny whispering sound." He learned that there is another side to God: his gentleness — a side more effective and more influential than force and denunciation. He learned that love is more powerful than fear to change hearts.

The disciples of the Lord also made the same mistake. They would have wooed Israel by the dint and flash of great miracles, like that of the loaves. So Jesus "insisted" that they get into a boat and flee to a place of miracles. They discovered in a storm at sea the power of "a tiny whispering sound" — His silent presence in the boat caused the winds to lie down. This silent speech touched their hearts more than the miracle of the loaves. They declared, "Beyond doubt you are the Son of God!"

So often people look for God in great signs and wonders, when all the while He is present in "a tiny whispering sound." We can find God in little things of life: the ordinary, everyday things. The husband in his work and love of wife and family; the wife and mother in her love and daily car-



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ing for her husband and children; and the children in their obedience to and love and respect for parents. "Tiny" things.

We can find God in the storms, too. There are times when the waves of misfortune, sickness, family tragedy, seem to engulf us. These try our faith. We are tempted to give up. At times like these, Jesus cries out to us, "It is I. Do not be afraid!" And we should cry out to Jesus, "Lord, save me!" and He will, just as He did Peter. We need not say much. Aren't the powerful and effective prayers in the Gospel short ones? "They have no wine." "He whom you love is sick." "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." "Lord, that I may see." "If you will, you can cleanse me."

Then there was the boat — symbol of the church, storm-tossed on the wild sea of life. Today so many are ready to see the weaknesses of the church. Some of "little

faith" would jump out of the boat like Peter. They would try to walk on the water of their natural resources — daring to dissent publicly with the Magisterium of the Church. And they will sink unless they look to the Vicar of Christ, to bring them back into the boat and salvation.

In 1933, God foretold to Sister Faustina that a spark would come out of Poland and set the world on fire. The spark has come and he is walking in the shoes of the fisherman.

An Englishman and his dog came to America. The master came by plane, the dog was sent by boat. All during the voyage, the dog was miserable, restless, frantic. On the return trip, both master and dog came by boat. This time, however, the dog was calm, happy, and at ease. It was the same crossing, but now the master was present.

So in these days when the aggression of Satan against the church and souls seems to have peaked, we must not become depressed, like Elijah, nor fearful, like the disciples, for God is still in "a tiny whispering sound" and watching from the mountaintop. "It is I. Do not be afraid!"

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